

## CHAPTER 44

### *Al-Dukhân: The Drought*

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 3 *sections*; 59 *verses*)

This is the fifth chapter of the *Hâ Mîm* group. It is known as *The Drought*, from the prophecy of the drought contained in verse 10. This prophecy is followed by another indicating that a severer punishment would follow, if they did not repent. The case of Pharaoh, who was drowned because he hardened his heart, is then cited. The remaining two sections of the chapter are devoted to a description of the condition of the righteous and the wicked. The chapter is, as it were, an explanation of the nature of the doom which awaited the opponents.

#### SECTION 1: **Lighter Punishment followed by Severer**

In the name of Allâh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

##### **1 *Hâ Mîm***

**2** By the Book that makes manifest!

**3** We revealed it on a blessed night<sup>a</sup> — truly We are ever warning.

**4** Therein is made clear every affair full of wisdom<sup>a</sup>—

**3a.** The revelation of the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân on *a blessed night* has a deeper meaning beneath it than the mere fact that the revelation began on the blessed night which is elsewhere called *lailat al-Qadr* (97:1), one of the last ten nights in the month of Ramadân. The *night* stands for a time of darkness, and hence a time of ignorance, when true knowledge had disappeared from the world. A prophet's advent is always preceded by such darkness, and when the Holy Prophet made his appearance, such darkness prevailed in all countries of the world. This night is called a blessed night because in it the world received the greatest manifestation of Divine light.

**4a.** Divine revelation distinguishes truth from falsehood and reveals the treasures of wisdom to human beings.

- 5 A command from Us — truly We are ever sending messengers —
- 6 A mercy from your *Rabb* — truly He is the Hearing, the Knowing,
- 7 The *Rabb* of the *samâwât* and the earth and what is between them, if you would be sure.
- 8 There is no Deity but He; He gives life and causes death — your *Rabb* and the *Rabb* of your fathers of yore.
- 9 Nay, in doubt they sport.
- 10 So wait for the day when the *samâ'* brings a clear drought,<sup>a</sup>
- 11 Enveloping men. This is a painful chastisement.
- 12 Our *Rabb*, remove from us the chastisement — surely we are believers.
- 13 When will they be reminded? And a Messenger has indeed come, making clear;
- 14 Yet they turned away from him and said: One taught (by others), a madman!
- 10a. *Dukhân* means *smoke*, or *mischievousness*, or *dearth*, or *drought*, or *hunger* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The commentators agree on the basis of highly trustworthy reports that its meaning here is *drought*. According to *Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faïd Murtaḍâ*, *dukhân* means *jadab*, i.e., dearth or drought, and *jû'* or *famine*, for (the drought brought on such misery that) the hungry man beheld smoke between him and the sky. Others, however, say the real reason why *hunger* is called *dukhân* is that because of the dry earth in a drought dust rises, creating a dusty atmosphere, which is likened to *smoke* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The chapter, as the whole tenor of it shows, belongs to the early Makkan period. The suggestion that this verse and those that follow up to the 16th or according to some only verse 15 and 16 belong to Madînah, is entirely without foundation. The statements made in these verses are all prophetic, and such is also the statement of verse 15, *We shall remove the chastisement a little*, because the removal of the drought was followed by the “violent seizing”, which brought on the conquest of Makkah. The *ḥadîth* has the following reference to it: “When the Prophet invited the Quraish to Islâm, they rejected him and opposed him; so he prayed, O Allâh, help me against them with seven years like the seven years of Yûsuf. So famine and distress overtook them and all their resources were exhausted, until they ate dead bodies, and a man used to look to *samâ'*, and he saw between him and it something like smoke on account of hard affliction” (*Bukhârî* 65: xlv, 4).
- 15 We shall remove the chastisement a little, (but) you will surely return (to evil).

**16** On the day when We seize (them) with the most violent seizing; surely We shall exact retribution.<sup>a</sup>

**17** And certainly We tried before them Pharaoh's people and a noble messenger came to them,

**18** Saying: Deliver to me the servants of Allâh.<sup>a</sup> Surely I am a faithful messenger to you.

**19** And exalt not yourselves against Allâh. Surely I bring to you a clear authority.

**20** And I take refuge with my *Rabb* and your *Rabb*, lest you stone me to death.

**21** And if you believe not in me, leave me alone.

**22** Then he called upon his *Rabb*: These are a guilty people.

**23** So go forth with My servants by night; surely you will be pursued,

**24** And leave the sea behind calm.<sup>a</sup> Surely they are a host to be drowned.

**16a.** The prophecy here seems to refer to the constant defeats in battle that were to be suffered by the Quraish, beginning with the battle of Badr, and resulting in the final overthrow of their power by the seizure of Makkah. Ibn Mas'ûd says that by *violent seizing* is meant the *day of Badr* (Bukhârî 65: xlv, 4). The discomfiture of the power of the Quraish began with Badr, and that power was utterly broken with the conquest of Makkah.

**18a.** Mûsâ wanted the Isrâ'îlites to be allowed to leave Egypt.

**24a.** *Rahw* has several significances. It means *an intervening space between two things* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faïd Murtaḍâ*), the sea or the river in this case being an intervening space between the Isrâ'îlites and the Egyptians. It also means *calm* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faïd Murtaḍâ*), it being implied that there was no storm in the sea when it was left by the Isrâ'îlites, so that the Egyptians, finding it calm and motionless, followed the Isrâ'îlites. Or *rahw* may signify *moving along easily*, referring to the Isrâ'îlites going along without fear of being overtaken.

**25** How many of the gardens and springs they left behind!

**26** And cornfields and noble places!

**27** And goodly things wherein they rejoiced!

**28** Thus (it was). And We made other people inherit them.

**29** So the *samâ'* and the earth wept not for them, nor were they respited.<sup>a</sup>

## SECTION 2: Good and Evil Rewarded

- 30 And We indeed delivered the Children of Isrâ'îl from the abasing chastisement,  
31 From Pharaoh. Surely he was haughty, prodigal.  
32 And certainly We chose them above the nations, having knowledge.  
33 And We gave them signs wherein was clear blessing.  
34 These do indeed say:  
35 There is naught but our first death and we shall not be raised again.  
36 So bring our fathers (back), if you are truthful.  
37 Are they better or the people of Tubba',<sup>a</sup> and those before them? We destroyed them, for surely they were guilty.

29a. The weeping for a dead man signifies the remembering of his good qualities or actions, which often bring tears to the eyes. *The samâ' and the earth* wept not for them because they had neither the love of Allâh in their hearts, nor had they done anything for the good of men, so that their good qualities should have been remembered either in *samâ'* or on earth.

37a. *Tubba'* is the surname of the kings of Yaman, but the name *Tubba'* was given only to those kings of Yaman who were rulers of Saba' and Hadramaut and the Himyar (*Lisân al-'Arab* (Dictionary), by 'Allâmah Abu-l-Faḍl Jamâl al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Mukarram). Generally *Tubba'* is taken to be the title of the kings of the Himyar. *Rûh al-Ma'ânî* (Commentary), by Abu-l-Faḍl Shahâb al-Dîn al-Sayyid Mahmûd al-Alûsî quotes '*Abd Allâh ibn 'Abbâs* (Companion) as saying that the particular *Tubba'* spoken of here was a prophet. It is generally believed that he was a believer in Allâh, while his people were disbelievers.

- 38 And We did not create the *samâwât* and the earth and that which is between them in sport.  
39 We created them not but with truth, but most of them know not.  
40 Surely the day of Decision is the term for them all,  
41 The day when friend will avail friend in naught, nor will they be helped —  
42 Save those on whom Allâh has mercy. Surely He is the Mighty, the Merciful.

### SECTION 3: Good and Evil Rewarded

- 43 Surely the tree of Zaqqûm<sup>a</sup>  
44 Is the food of the sinful,  
45 Like molten brass; it seethes in (their) bellies  
46 Like boiling water.  
47 Seize him, then drag him into the midst of hell;  
48 Then pour on his head of the torment of boiling water —  
49 Taste — you are forsooth the mighty, the honourable!<sup>a</sup>  
50 Surely this is what you doubted.  
51 Those who keep their duty are indeed in a secure place —

43a. See 37:62a.

49a. Those who considered themselves mighty and honourable in the land and tried their utmost to exterminate the Truth were ultimately brought low in the land in this very life and thus tasted the consequences of their arrogance.

- 52 In gardens and springs,  
53 Wearing fine and thick silk, facing one another —  
54 Thus (shall it be). And We shall join them to pure, beautiful ones.<sup>a</sup>  
55 They call therein for every fruit in security —  
56 They taste not therein death, except the first death; and He will save them from the chastisement of hell —  
57 A grace from your *Rabb*. This is the great achievement.  
58 So We have made it easy in your tongue that they may mind.  
59 Wait then; surely they (too) are waiting.

54a. See 52:20a.